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Prevention of armed conflict

Culture of peace

Advancement of women

Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Letter dated 23 June 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith the Baku Declaration on Expanding the Role of Women in Cross-Cultural Dialogue and the joint statement by the First Ladies of Azerbaijan, Angola, Latvia, Poland and South Africa issued on 11 June 2008 during the International Baku Forum organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Heydar Aliyev Foundation (see annex).

I should be grateful if the above-mentioned Declaration and statement were distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 14, 49, 63 and 70 (b).

(*Signed*) Agshin **Mehdiyev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 23 June 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Baku Declaration on Expanding the Role of Women in Cross-Cultural Dialogue

11 June 2008

We, the participants in the International Baku Forum on Expanding the Role of Women in Cross-Cultural Dialogue,

Expressing our common concern on increasing intolerance and xenophobia on the basis of racial, ethnic, religious and gender differences,

Bearing in mind the necessity of safeguarding and promoting the universal values in our increasingly interconnected world,

Underlining, in this context, the growing importance of intercultural and inter-religious dialogue with respect to the wealth of the world's cultural diversity,

Emphasizing the crucial role of women in the development of intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, thus strengthening peace, stability and cooperation in the world,

Highlighting the invaluable contribution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) to enhancing a sustainable intercultural dialogue,

Recalling the provisions of the international legal instruments on the role of women in the development of society and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women,

Noting, in this framework, the fortunate coincidence of the International Baku Forum with the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which provides a timely opportunity to reflect on the links between human rights, cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and gender equality,

Highly appreciating all efforts made by international organizations, governments, youth and women's movements as well as other initiatives aimed at fostering intercultural dialogue,

Welcome the initiative of Mrs. Mehriban Aliyeva, First Lady of the Republic of Azerbaijan, President of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, UNESCO and ISESCO Goodwill Ambassador, to hold such an important meeting devoted to the women's contribution to cross-cultural dialogue,

Also welcome the contribution of the First Ladies of Azerbaijan, Angola, Latvia, Poland and the Republic of South Africa, as well as the spouses of the Prime Minister of Turkey and the Vice-President of Argentina, the Deputy Speaker of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation, the First Lady of Texas, Ministers and other high-level representatives to the International Baku Forum and underline their positive input to the development of a lasting dialogue inside their countries and beyond,

Express our firm determination to provide an enabling environment for equal participation of women in all processes of dialogue for peace,

We hereby declare our common determination and:

1. Call on all Governments and civil society actors to spare no efforts in promoting gender equality, sustainable dialogue, tolerance, justice and peaceful coexistence;

2. Express our determination to actively participate in strengthening intercultural dialogue and supporting women's further efforts for convergence of the common values of the whole humanity;

3. Call on all Governments to increase the participation of women in all spheres of decision-making, as well as in peacebuilding processes with a special emphasis on conflict resolution;

4. Emphasize women's contribution to reshaping the collective imagination and overcoming stereotypes and prejudices, both of which are essential for fostering mutual understanding;

5. Stress the importance of providing girls and young women every educational, economic, social and political opportunity as a guarantee of a sustainable future for all generations;

6. Express our conviction that gender equality and the elimination of all forms of violence against women is the basis of development in every sphere and at every level, from family to society;

7. Call on all Governments and civil societies to extend prospective research on the role of women in strengthening mutual understanding between cultures, and to disseminate the results of these studies;

8. Agree to promote the role of women in mass media aiming at valorizing their image as well as their achievements in ensuring intercultural dialogue;

9. Express readiness to facilitate the consolidation of efforts of governmental, political, social and religious organizations aimed at strengthening peace, cooperation and mutual understanding;

10. Call on all Governments and civil societies to prevent the use of cultural and spiritual values and beliefs for political purposes;

11. Solemnly proclaim the Baku Declaration on Expanding the Role of Women in Cross-Cultural Dialogue to affirm the significant importance of the dialogue to ensure peaceful coexistence in contemporary multicultural societies;

12. Also announce the establishment of the Baku Forum aiming at turning the intercultural dialogue into a continuous process and agree to continue our activities in the framework of the next Forum to be held in 2010 in Baku;

13. Welcome the Youth Forum held within the International Baku Forum and its recommendations;

14. Call on all participants to spare no effort to actively promote the implementation of provisions of this Declaration at national, regional and international levels;

15. Express our deep gratitude to the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, UNESCO and ISESCO for organizing this Forum and call upon them to consider the possibility of establishing a working secretariat with the aim of preparing the next Forum.

Statement of the First Ladies, participants in the Baku Forum on Expanding the Role of Women in Cross-Cultural Dialogue

11 June 2008

We, spouses of the Heads of State of Azerbaijan, Angola, Latvia, Poland and South Africa, participants in the International Baku Forum,

Gathered in Baku on 10 and 11 June 2008 to discuss the issues of intercultural and inter-religious dialogue in the era of globalization,

Underlined the significant role of women in developing and strengthening intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, in preserving cultural values and in promoting the culture of dialogue,

Expressed the firm determination to continue our efforts in strengthening international peace, stability and cooperation,

Recognized that the eradication of poverty and equal participation of women in all spheres of life is the necessary condition of a harmonious development of the society,

Specially noted the importance of ensuring the access of women to quality education and of promoting their research activities,

Also noted the important role of mass media in the formation of a tolerant society,

Underlined the importance of the establishment of the Baku Forum, aimed at making intercultural dialogue a sustainable process,

Expressed our gratitude to Mrs. Mehriban Aliyeva, First Lady of the Republic of Azerbaijan, for the initiative to hold this Forum, as well as expressed our thanks to the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan for its hospitality,

Agreed to continue our efforts within the Baku Forum in order to strengthen the cross-cultural dialogue.